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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON GENEVA
DISCUSSIONS

¶1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the September 24, 2009, meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna:

Begin text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The United States commends the coordination by the OSCE, EU, and UN of the September 17 Geneva discussions on security and stability arrangements in Georgia. We appreciate relatively constructive exchange of views among participants, and encourage all parties to work together in a cooperative and practical spirit to make concrete progress on issues of concern. Toward that end, we hope the joint incident prevention and response mechanisms will continue to meet regularly. We urge all parties to participate actively and pragmatically, and to make full use of hotlines and other means of preventing and responding to incidents. We also urge all parties to prepare diligently for the November 11 round of Geneva discussions, and to concentrate on achieving concrete results.

Though there was some recognizing progress, Madam Chairwoman, we all know very well that problems remain. Incidents along the administrative boundary lines continue to undermine security in Georgia, and civilians in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia continue to suffer. In dealing with these issues, we will continue to advocate a role for the international community, and to call for an international presence in the separatist regions. We will also continue to urge respect for the human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas; to call for free and unhindered humanitarian access to the separatist regions; and to call for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

Russia's ongoing failure to implement fully the provisions of the August 12 and September 8 agreements remains a matter of grave concern. Russia committed not only to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities, but also to provide free and unhindered humanitarian access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia. We remind Russia that its characterization of these regions as independent does not relieve it of its commitments.

In closing, Madam Chairwoman, let me reiterate my government's support for the discussion process in Geneva. Let me also reiterate our continuing support for Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
CLINTON